

Message Text

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14-10
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

SAM-01 /056 W
----- 020704

R 050220Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5195
INFO AMCONSUL SYDNEY
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CANBERRA 1408

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AS, PFOR
SUBJ: SENATOR CLEAVER BUNTON SWORN IN AND TAKES PLACE
AS INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF SENATE

REF: SYDNEY 0419

1. MR. CLEAVER BUNTON, UNTIL RECENTLY MAYOR OF ALBURY, NSW, WAS SWORN IN WITHOUT INCIDENT AS MEMBER OF FEDERAL SENATE ON MARCH 4. HE TOOK A SEAT RESERVED FOR INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF SENATE, VOTED WITH LABOR GOVERNMENT ON PROCEDURAL MOTION TO EXTEND SITTING HOURS OF SENATE, AND ABSTAINED ON OTHER ITEMS OF LEGISLATION ON GROUNDS HE HAD NOT HAD TIME TO STUDY THEIR MERITS.

2. AFTER LEAVING SENATE CHAMBER HE TOLD PRESS, QTE I AM A REAL POLITICAL NEUTER. END QTE. HE SAID HE WOULD IN THE FUTURE VOTE ON ISSUES ON THEIR MERITS AND ADDED, QTE I WOULD NOT VOTE TO BRING ABOUT THE REJECTION OF SUPPLY UNLESS SOMETHING OF A CRUCIAL CHARACTER CAME UP END QTE, BUT HE REFUSED TO BE DRAWN ON WHAT SUCH A CRUCIAL ISSUE WOULD BE.

3. COMMENT: IT MAY BE WORTH RECALLING THAT BALANCE OF VOTING
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IN 60-MEMBER SENATE AT PRESENT IS AS FOLLOWS: LIBERAL-COUNTRY

PARTIES, 30 (INCLUDING FORMER INDEPENDENT SENATOR TOWNLEY, WHO IS NOW FORMALLY PART F LCP GROUP); ALP, 28 (SINCE RESIGNATION OF SENATOR MURPHY); AND TWO INDEPENDENTS, SENATORS STEELE HALL (SOUTH AUSTRALIA) AND SENATOR BUNTON (NEW SOUTH WALES). LIBERAL-COUNTRY PARTIES HAVE THE NUMBERS TO WITHHOLD SUPPLY IF THEIR DISCIPLINE IS MAINTAINED. DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES AND ISSUE, BOTH INDEPENDENTS HAVE LEFT OPEN POSSIBILITY THAT THEY WOULD VOTE TO WITHHOLD SUPPLY. HOWEVER, THIS SITUATION MAY NEVER ARISE, EITHER BECAUSE OPPOSITION MAINTAINS VOTING DISCIPLINE AND BLOCKS SUPPLY BILL WITH ITS OWN NUMBERS OR (LESS LIKELY IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE) BECAUSE PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HIMSELF MOVES FOR DOUBLE DISSOLUTION OF BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT ON GROUNDS ESSENTIAL PORTIONS OF HIS LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM HAVE BEEN BLOCKED BY SENATE. CONSTITUTIONAL GROUNDS FOR DOUBLE DISSOLUTION ALREADY EXIST FOR SUCH ACTION.

HARROP

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Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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